

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE
CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS

FOR YOUR INFORMATION FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF NYT ARTICLE
BY BERNARD GWERTZMAN WHICH APPEARED ON PAGE ONE OF SUNDAY
EDITION:

WASHINGTON, JULY 2 - THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS BEGUN
UNPUBLICIZED CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS ON PROVIDING ABOUT
DOLS 100 MILLION IN MILITARY AID TO LEBANON TO HELP THE WAR-
RAVAGED COUNTRY CREATE A LIGHT INFANTRY FORCE TO MAINTAIN
INTERNAL ORDER.

STATE DEPARTMENT AND SENATE SOURCES SAID TODAY THAT THE
ADMINISTRATION WOULD LIKE TO UNDERSCORE ITS SUPPORT FOR THE
GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT ELIAS SARKIS BY CONTRIBUTING TO
THE NEW FORCE NOW BEING ORGANIZED IN LEBANON.

LEBANON'S ARMY WAS DISBANDED DURING THE COUNTRY'S LENGTHY
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CIVIL STRIFE AND ORDER IS NOW MAINTAINED BY A 30,000-MAN
ARAB LEAGUE FORCE, MADE UP MOSTLY OF SYRIAN UNITS.

UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION PLAN, AS CONVEYED TO THE SENATE
FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, LEBANON WOULD BE GRANTED
DOLS 75 MILLION TO DOLS 100 MILLION IN CREDITS TO
PURCHASE LIGHT INFANTRY WEAPONS FOR A FORCE OF 3,000 TO

4,000 MEN.

SENATE COMMITTEE CONSULTED. ALFRED L. ATHERTON, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS, OUTLINED THE ADMINISTRATION'S IDEAS ON THE SUBJECT TO THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE ON THURSDAY, DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAID. HE STRESSED, THEY SAID, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS "CONSULTING" WITH CONGRESS ON THE ADVISABILITY OF THE PLAN AND HAD NOT DEFINITELY DECIDED TO GO AHEAD WITH IT.

THE ADMINISTRATION IS MOVING CAUTIOUSLY BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO ANY MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ARAB STATES THAT COULD BE USED AGAINST ISRAEL, A CONCERN THAT IS MAGNIFIED BECAUSE LEBANON BORDERS ON ISRAEL. MOREOVER, THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE THAT UP TO NOW AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON HAS BEEN LIMITED TO ABOUT DOLS 5 MILLION IN CREDITS A YEAR.

UNDER THE PLAN OUTLINED BY MR. ATHERTON, SENATE SOURCES SAID, THE UNITED STATES WOULD SELL TO LEBANON COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES SUCH AS JEEPS, TRUCKS AND PERSONNEL CARRIERS, AND LIGHT INFANTRY WEAPONS SUCH AS RIFLES, CARBINES, MACHINE GUNS, AUTOMATIC RIFLES, MORTARS, AND LIGHT ARTILLERY.

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THERE IS NO INTENTION TO SELL TO LEBANON ANY HEAVY MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUCH AS TANKS, HEAVY ARTILLERY OR COMBAT AIRCRAFT, STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAID. THEY SAID THAT IF LEBANON WANTED TANKS IT WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO BUY THEM FROM FRANCE.

AID FOR SARKIS GOVERNMENT. EVER SINCE THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL LAST YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN SEEKING WAYS OF AIDING MR. SARKIS'S GOVERNMENT.

WHEN SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS R. VANCE VISITED BEIRUT LAST FEBRUARY DURING A MIDDLE EAST TRIP, HE ANNOUNCED A DOLS 50 MILLION PACKAGE TO AID LEBANON'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY. THE DOLS 50 MILLION IS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR THAT ENDS ON SEPT. 30. FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR, CONGRESS HAS APPROVED DOLS 20 MILLION IN ECONOMIC AID.

THE MILITARY CREDITS BEING DISCUSSED WITH CONGRESS WOULD BE USED OVER THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR AND THE 1978 AND 1979 FISCAL YEARS, OFFICIALS SAID.

IN ADDITION TO MILITARY SALES, THE UNITED STATES WOULD CONTINUE TO TRAIN SOME LEBANESE OFFICERS IN THIS COUNTRY. A 3,000 TO 4,000-MAN ARMED FORCE COULD BE USED TO HELP STABILIZE THE AREA BORDERING ON ISRAEL, WHERE CHRISTIAN AND PALESTINIAN FORCES ARE AGAIN CLASHING, OFFICIALS SAID, AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE FAVORED BY ISRAEL. ACCORDING TO SENATE AND STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS THE RESPONSE OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WAS SKEPTICAL. THEY SAID THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS HAD RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN LEBANON MILITARILY. ALTHOUGH MR. ATHERTON SAID THE ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTION WAS TO MAKE A ONE-TIME CONTRIBUTION TO THE LEBANESE FORCE AND NOT BECOME DEEPLY INVOLVED, SENATOR JOHN H. GLENN, JR., DEMOCRAT OF OHIO, WAS QUOTED AS HAVING SAID:

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"THAT'S LIKE SAYING YOU'RE ONLY HALF PREGNANT," VANCE

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